

Mishka Henner, Precious Commodities

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Karen Newman

REF Output Supporting Documentation

Mishka Henner

Precious Commodities

Curated exhibition featuring specially commissioned work
at Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool

02 March – 29 April 2013

Exhibition Website:

<http://www.openeye.org.uk/main-exhibition/mishka-henner/>

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BLOG > MISHKA HENNER: PRECIOUS COMMODITIES

"ONE OF THE BEST PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWS I'VE SEEN IN A LONG TIME" RIVERCOOL.COM

MISHKA HENNER: PRECIOUS COMMODITIES

2 MAR 2013 - 29 APRIL 2013



Less Américains-Hoboken © Mishka Henner w.coppy

Born in Brussels in 1976, Manchester-based Mishka Henner's work explores and subverts the value of photography in today's media-saturated world. His images derive from a multitude of sources – the Internet, satellite imagery and television, as well as the precious canon of photography, calling to question the idea of authorship and challenging traditional associations of photography through a singular viewpoint.

Henner's exhibition in the main galleries at Open Eye presents new work exhibited for the first time – *Levelland Oil Field* and *Feedlots* (2012–2013). For these works Henner has captured meticulously detailed aerial photographs of immense cattle feedlot farms and oil and gas fields in the US, seamlessly compositing multiple images together to create ultra-high definition images which are printed large format.

The exhibition also presents Henner's controversial new work *Less Américains* (2012) in which Henner erases Robert Frank's highly influential 1958 book *Les Américains* (considered by many to be the 'Bible' of American photography). *Less Américains* is shown alongside a number of other works which investigate the photo book as a form, such as *Photography Is* (2010–2013) which collects thousands of found phrases beginning with the words "Photography is:" from a wealth of sources including books, technical manuals, blogs, newspapers and scientific journals.



EVENTS

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

PAST EXHIBITIONS

Newman researched Henner’s existing works and discussed these with the artist during studio visits and meetings. The following excerpts are taken from an email conversation between Newman and Henner, where Newman sets out the curatorial framework for the exhibition following her research and negotiates the list of works for the exhibition.

On 08 Sep 2012, at 11:43, Mishka Henner <mishkahenner@gmx.com> wrote:

Hi Karen,

I like the idea of including the geological maps. And happy to include the Vice poster, what you’re explaining does add an interesting new dimension.

Mishka

email: mishkahenner@gmx.com
web: www.mishkahenner.com

On 06 Sep 2012, at 20:04, Karen Newman <karen@openeye.org.uk> wrote:

Hi Mishka,

That’s fine to save Collected Portraits for another show with Less Americains (look forward to seeing that show one day!).

I don’t think people will read the Vice poster in that way. All of the work is very new, and including this adds a further subversion to the process the image goes through. It makes clear the changing value of the image as it is seen in the different contexts, which is what you’re also trying to do with turning the free Vice magazine into signed limited editions and selling them on as artworks...

I’ve been thinking about those old geological survey maps too. Would you be happy to show a few of those in Gallery 1 alongside the oilfield and cattle farm google earth works? I like the idea of showing the process you go through to make the work, the idea that it’s not a straight-forward screen grab and that you study the landscape initially using a traditional method before zooming in digitally, that there is a process of research involved. Also like the old vs new technology side by side, and the contrast with the giant / detailed prints with the new works says a lot about the mass of data now available (and exploitable).

Best,

Karen

On 04 Sep 2012, at 19:41, Mishka Henner <mishkahenner@gmx.com> wrote:

Hi Karen,

Thanks for your email and for coming to the studio last week.

I like the idea of breaking the show up in the way you’re suggesting. But I don’t want to include Collected Portraits with Less Americains. I thought about pairing those together recently but I think if we did that they would have to be shown on their own as an exhibition in its own right.

That’s an interesting idea about the Vice cover, though I’d be a bit nervous to do that in case people perceive the exhibition as a Mid-career show and a way of looking retrospectively at the work. I’m not ready for that kind of show yet. I’ll have a think about other options.

Mishka

email: mishkahenner@gmx.com
web: www.mishkahenner.com

On 04 Sep 2012, at 16:39, Karen Newman <karen@openeye.org.uk> wrote:

Hi Mishka,

Following our discussions during my studio visit last week, I’d like to propose the following list of works for inclusion in your Open Eye show.

I’d like the show to focus on new and recent works which highlight some of photography’s current controversies. I suggest we do this by breaking up the show into two distinct themes, which are explored into the respective two gallery spaces.

Gallery 1

I’s like Gallery 1 to focus on your Google Earth and Google Street View works, and to do this by showing a selection of new commissioned super-detailed aerial viewpoints of the landscapes, the cattle farms and oil fields you showed me in your studio. The macro detail of these works (which also challenge conventional ground-level approaches of recent figures such as as Ed Burtinsky, Michl Epstein etc) could be complemented by a large-scale print, taking over the entire width of the far wall in Gallery 1 (directly opposite the entrance). If this could be made big enough to fill the visitors peripheral vision as they stand in front of the piece, and shown as a naked print without glazing, this would hint at the pervasive quality and mass of data that can be accessed immediately through online mapping tools. The combination of oil fields and cattle farms in the smaller prints will also complement the idea of mass, and mass photography which we (society) engage with today.

Gallery 2

I’d like to make a small but provocative selection of works in here that has a completely different vibe to Gallery 1 and. In this space we could explore appropriation through subverting the book form, and in that way connect photography’s relationship to print in the wider sense and the contention of this relationship today. To counteract the mass and colour in Gallery 1, I’d like to select a grouping of black and white works which feel in a sense quite refined at first glance, but on inspection question digital technologies’ impact on the value (market value and ideas of authorship) of photography today. We discussed Less Americains and approx 20 of these framed in classic black frames to echo the original format for Robert Frank’s Les Americains. If we use those on the long centre wall, we could book-end this work with two other projects on the opposing walls. There are several options here which would pair nicely with Less Americains. I love the idea of using Photography Is as this work strips away the authoritative voice of photography discourse by opening up a series of random unintentional conversations about what photography ‘is’ today. So we could show this as a long black and white print, and maybe use a plasma screen with a live feed from Twitter which streams anything anyone posts with the words ‘photography Is’.

On the opposite wall we could show a selection of Collected Portraits from your book. I like the idea of faces emerging after multiple scanned layers and the reference to leading portrait artist figures such as Araki makes a nice conversation with Robert Frank on the adjacent wall (and counteracts the ‘loss’ of image in those prints). Also complements the ‘anti-hierarchy’ discourse of Photography Is opposite. Alternatively, we could do a flip of the image you’ve used for the Vice Magazine front cover. If we used the Vice image as one of the works in Gallery 1, we could complement this with a high-res scan of the front cover of Vice Magazine in Gallery 2. A poster print pasted straight onto the gallery wall would look great and is economical (also adds to the temporary non-high art nature of the resulting image which has gone through this process of de-valuation).

We discussed including a selection of your photo books in the exhibition, and if we had these on specially constructed tables in Gallery 2 I think that would round off the show nicely and give the audience a chance to consider your work in a different format, which complements the ideas behind that selection in gallery 2. I’m happy for you to make this selection, but I would love to include Astronomical in that as there is a nice connection there to On Kawara’s One Million Years and that linking to another historical figure ferments what you’re also doing with Less Americains and Collected Portraits.

Let me know what you think.

Best,

Karen

Karen Newman
Curator

Open Eye Gallery
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Liverpool Waterfront
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Tel. 0044 (0)151 2366768
www.openeye.org.uk

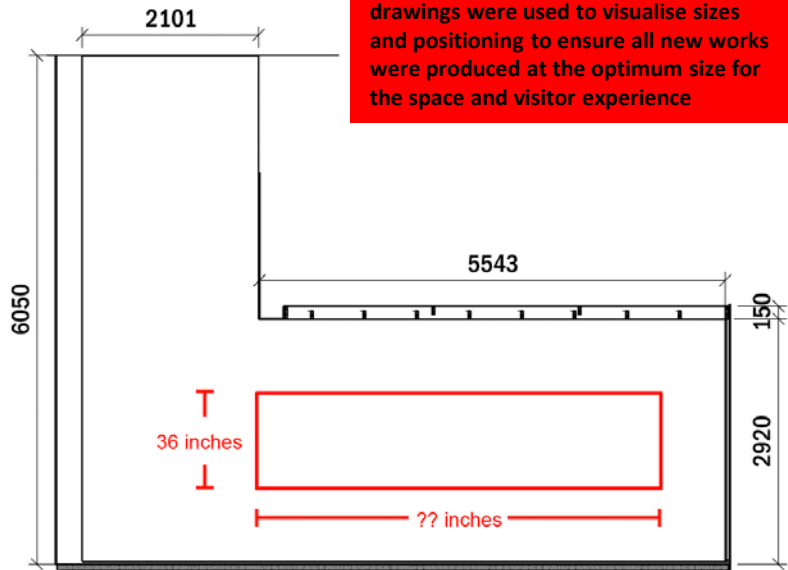
Gallery plans were developed through negotiation with the artist, focussing on details such as production format, sizes and placing. All artworks were newly produced specifically for the exhibition.



These early hand-drawn gallery plans show Newman's initial thoughts prior to discussion with the artist over selection of works



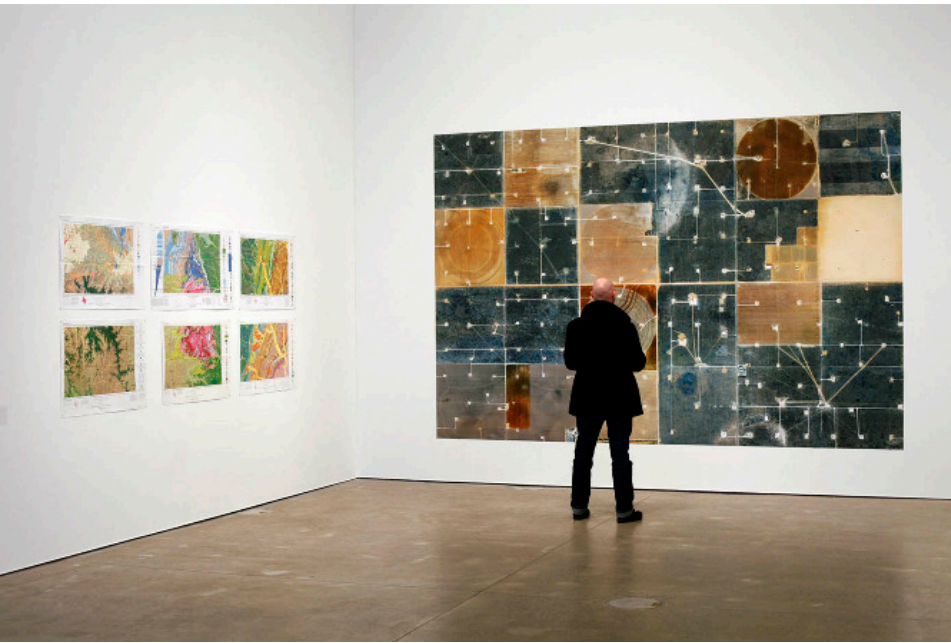
Once the list of work was agreed, CAD drawings were used to visualise sizes and positioning to ensure all new works were produced at the optimum size for the space and visitor experience



Gallery 2 - Elevation C
GIANT VICE COVER



(top left) Gallery 1 installation view, showing geological survey maps to the left alongside giant Levelland Oilfield (2013) (top right) two of Henner's Feedlots (2013) works
(bottom left) Gallery 2 installation view, showing Photography Is (2013) on far wall, Less Americans (2013) centre wall with artist books on tables
(bottom middle) Feedlot (2013) (bottom right) Poster print of the cover of Vice Magazine's Hopelessness Issue, featuring Henner's Feedlot image (2013)



Once Henner’s list of works was agreed, Newman selected prints from Open Eye Gallery’s Archive by Austrian photographer and Soviet spy Edith Tudor-Hart (1908-1973). These were shown in Open Eye’s Archive Gallery alongside Henner’s exhibition in the Main Galleries. The Edith Tudor-Hart selection included street scenes of political protests and industrial landscapes, often from elevated and aerial viewpoints. The exhibition included a timeline of Tudor-Hart’s biographical details and political events, tracing Tudor-Hart’s involvement with the KGB and Cambridge Spy Ring. This was edited from Newman’s research into Tudor-Hart’s life, including an interview with her brother Wolf Suschitzky. The exhibition chimed with Henner’s contemporary perspectives made possible through digital technology. The pairing of the Henner and Tudor-Hart exhibitions enabled the audience to consider photography more widely as a tool for expressing political ideas, as well as considering the potential exploitation of pervasive new media.



Edith Tudor-Hart: Quiet Radicalism installation views

Edith Tudor-Hart Selections

Most 12x16" prints, some 12x14" to fit existing frame stock (18.5x24 1/4" back frames) - used for Chris Steele Perkin?

Image No.	ETH 60		
Artist / Photographer			
First Name	Edith		
Last Name	Tudor-Hart (1908 - 1973)		
Exhibition Title	Edith Tudor-Hart Retrospective		
Exhibition Date	16 January - 25 February	Year	1992
Image Title	Vienna, March 1934		



Copyright Wolf Suschitzky

Image Date	1934		
Image No.	ETH 59		
Artist / Photographer			
First Name	Edith		
Last Name	Tudor-Hart (1908 - 1973)		
Exhibition Title	Edith Tudor-Hart Retrospective		
Exhibition Date	16 January - 25 February	Year	1992
Image Title	Protest Meeting against Oppression and Persecution in Germany, Westminster Hall, London		



Copyright Wolf Suschitzky

Image Date	1930s		
Image No.	ETH 47		
Artist / Photographer			
First Name	Edith		
Last Name	Tudor-Hart (1908 - 1973)		
Exhibition Title	Edith Tudor-Hart Retrospective		
Exhibition Date	16 January - 25 February	Year	1992
Image Title	Demonstration, South Wales		



Copyright Wolf Suschitzky

Below is a list of archive records and thumbnail images which illustrates part of Newman’s curatorial selection of Tudor-Hart works

Image No.	ETH 71		
Artist / Photographer			
First Name	Edith		
Last Name	Tudor-Hart (1908 - 1973)		
Exhibition Title	Edith Tudor-Hart Retrospective		
Exhibition Date	16 January - 25 February	Year	1992
Image Title	Vienna		



Copyright Wolf Suschitzky

Image Date	c. 1930
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Image No.	ETH 41		
Artist / Photographer			
First Name	Edith		
Last Name	Tudor-Hart (1908 - 1973)		
Exhibition Title	Edith Tudor-Hart Retrospective		
Exhibition Date	16 January - 25 February	Year	1992
Image Title	Mine, Rhondda Valley, South Wales		



Copyright Wolf Suschitzky

Image Date	c. 1934
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Image No.	ETH 15		
Artist / Photographer			
First Name	Edith		
Last Name	Tudor-Hart (1908 - 1973)		
Exhibition Title	Edith Tudor-Hart Retrospective		
Exhibition Date	16 January - 25 February	Year	1992
Image Title	Mine, South Wales		



Copyright Wolf Suschitzky

Image Date	c. 1930
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MAIN EXHIBITION
MISHKA HENNER:
PRECIOUS
COMMODITIES

Mishka Henner's images derive from a multitude of sources – the Internet, satellite imagery, popular culture and the history of photography. His works call for a radical re-appraisal of photography in today's media saturated world.

Gallery 1 presents *Levelland Oilfield and Feedlots* (2012-2013), works from a new series exploring the US oil and beef industries – two cornerstones of American culture and its economy. Exhibited for the first time, giant cattle feeding farms sit adjacent to the giant Levelland and Slaughter gas and oil field in Texas. The high level of detail is achieved through a painstaking process in which the artist digitally assembles hundreds of satellite images acquired through online mapping tools such as Google Earth and Bing Maps. In their scale and scope, these works challenge conventional ground-based photographic approaches to picturing the effects of these industries on the landscape.

Gallery 2 brings together a selection of Henner's works that explore and subvert the photobook form, examining photography's relationship to printed media. *For Less Americans*, 2012. Henner has erased the faces from the portraits of Robert Frank's seminal photobook *Les Américains* from 1958 (considered by many to be the 'bible' of American photography). Henner's controversial re-appropriation of a highly influential book has sparked debate within the photography community about the relevance of authorship in a photography world exposed to digital technologies.

Photography Is (2010-2013) consists of a large inkjet print in which Henner has collected phrases relating to photography from wealth of sources including books, technical manuals, blogs, newspapers and scientific journals. By isolating these (often) unintentional interpretations, the piece suggests an open-ended public discussion around photography – an alternative discourse that is seemingly at odds with that of photography critics and historians.

Also in Gallery 2, a blown-up poster print of the front cover of *Vice Magazine* featuring an image from Henner's *Feedlot* series shows the Artist's interest in the re-appropriation of images, and how these find new meaning within wider popular culture.

Alongside Henner's own works in book form, a selection of publications by the Artist Book Cooperative (of which Henner is a member) has been specially curated by Mishka Henner, and includes titles by Fred Free, Travis Shaffer, Andreas Schmidt, Jonathan Lewis, Joachim Schmidt, Eric Doeringer, Elisabeth Tonnard, Herman Zichagner, Paul Soulellis and Victor Sira.

Born in Brussels in 1976, Mishka Henner lives and works in Manchester. He is currently shortlisted as one of the four photographers for the prestigious Deutsche Börse Photography Prize 2013. This is Henner's first major exhibition in the UK.

ARCHIVE EXHIBITION
EDITH TUDOR-HART:
QUIET RADICALISM

Austrian born Edith Tudor-Hart (née Soschitzky) was a photographer, communist-sympathiser and spy for the Soviet Union, who used photography as a tool to communicate her political ideas.

After studying at the Bauhaus (an influential German school of art), Tudor-Hart fled Vienna in 1933 to escape persecution for Communist activities. She was later instrumental in setting up the Cambridge Spy Ring, which damaged British intelligence from WW1 until the late 1960s.

This exhibition presents a selection of prints from Open Eye Gallery's extraordinary archive holdings, tracing Tudor-Hart's movements from Vienna and across the UK. Many images were originally commissioned as editorial assignments, or used to support political campaigns. Aerial and street-view scenes capture conflict in Vienna prior to Tudor-Hart's departure for England. During the mid 1930s, Tudor-Hart's photographs of the Rhonda Valley in Wales document working conditions for coal mining communities, which featured in journals such as *The Listener*.

From the late 1930s through to the 1950s, Tudor-Hart's focus shifted towards social care (her own son suffering from Schizophrenia). It was during this time that Tudor-Hart produced some of her most striking and compassionate images, such as those taken at the former Fountain Hospital in London which were used in print campaigns towards better care and education for children with special needs and disabilities.

MAIN EXHIBITION

MISHKA HENNER:
PRECIOUS COMMODITIES

Born in Brussels in 1976, Manchester based Mishka Henner's images derive from a multitude of sources – the Internet, satellite imagery, popular culture and the history of photography. His works question the value of photography in today's media saturated world.

Gallery 1 presents *Levelland Oil Field and Feedlots* (2012-2013), works from a new series exploring the US oil and beef industries, exhibited for the first time, giant cattle feeding farms sit adjacent to the huge Levelland and Slaughter gas and oil field in Texas. The high level of detail is achieved through a process in which the artist digitally assembles hundreds of satellite images acquired through online mapping tools such as Google Earth and Bing Maps.

A selection of geological maps are exhibited next to *Levelland Oil Field*, which Henner initially used to study the landscape before finding it so precise looking using online mapping tools.


Gallery 2 brings together a selection of Henner's works that explore and subvert the photobook form, examining photography's relationship to printed media. *For Less Americans* (2012) Henner has erased the faces from the portraits of Robert Frank's seminal photobook and described this idea (considered by many to be the 'bible' of American photography).


Photography Is (2010-2013) consists of a large inkjet print in which Henner has collected phrases relating to photography from a wealth of sources including books, technical manuals, blogs, newspapers and scientific journals. 'What is photography?', a blown-up poster print of the front cover of *Vice Magazine* featuring an image from the Artist's *Feedlot* series shows Henner's interest in the re-appropriation of images, and how these find new meaning within wider popular culture.

Alongside Henner's own works in book form, a selection of publications by the Artist Book Cooperative (of which Henner is a member) has been specially curated by Mishka Henner, and includes titles by Fred Free, Travis Shaffer, Andreas Schmidt, Jonathan Lewis, Joachim Schmidt, Eric Doeringer, Elisabeth Tonnard, Herman Zichagner, Paul Soulellis and Victor Sira.



Now playing...





Mishka Henner & Karen Newman in conversation :: New visual culture, appropriation and satellites

By OpenEyeGallery Follow

0:00:00 -1:18:50


Deutsche Börse nominee, self-publisher, work on the Vice Magazine cover... Mishka Henner is quite a different visual artist.

Open Eye Gallery proudly launched the Precious Commodities show on 01 March 2013, and the next morning hosted a talk with curator, Karen Newman and creator, Mishka Henner. Considering the virtual world, Henner's early exploration of visual data and the nature of what it means for something in photographic history to be 'sacred'.

By opening up the conversation to online interruption we even find out about the oldest man made item Henner owns...

Precious Commodities runs until 05 May 2013

Uploaded 2 months ago - <http://i1.mxlcloud.com/CCP0qK>



Vice Magazine featured a six page spread of images and review of the exhibition, which was distributed globally in three languages.

The exhibition was reviewed by other national and international press including:

Frieze Magazine

The Guardian

Design Boom

Double Negative

Work commissioned for the exhibition has toured internationally including 'The Constructed View: UK Photography Now' exhibition for Dong Gang Photography Festival, China (from 19 July – 22 September 2013).